

The 2025 NFL Draft – The Iowa Commercial Real Estate Edition

In both commercial real estate (CRE) and the NFL Draft, success hinges on strategic planning, talent evaluation, and long-term vision. The 2025 NFL Draft showcased how teams, much like real estate investors, assess potential, manage risks, and build for the future.

Scouting for Potential: Evaluating Investments and Athletes - In CRE, investors meticulously analyze properties, considering location, market trends, and potential returns. Similarly, NFL teams assess players' college performances, physical attributes, and adaptability to professional play.

Strategic Positioning: Building a Balanced Portfolio and Team - Diversification is key in CRE to mitigate risks and maximize returns. NFL teams adopt a similar approach, balancing their rosters with a mix of seasoned players and promising rookies.

Development and Value Add: Coaching and Property Management - Post-acquisition, both real estate assets and NFL players require development to realize their full potential.

Market Timing and Risk Management - Understanding market cycles is crucial in CRE to make informed investment decisions. Similarly, NFL teams must gauge the right time to draft players, balancing immediate needs with future prospects.

Here's a focus on our CRE evaluations for standout players from Iowa and Iowa State.

Jaylin Noel = Neighborhood Retail Center

Versatile and reliable: Noel has been a consistent contributor, with over 60 receptions in each of his last three seasons. He works well in short and intermediate routes, functions in special teams, and fills multiple roles.

Steady, essential service: Like a neighborhood retail center anchored by a grocery store or pharmacy, he might not be flashy, but he's always producing — the kind of asset that holds value through cycles.

CRE Traits:

High occupancy – Like Noel's high target share and usage.

Community-focused – He's the guy you can count on every drive, just as a neighborhood retail property delivers daily foot traffic.

Stable cash flow – You know what you're getting with Noel, and he delivers.

Jayden Higgins = Suburban Class B Office with Upside

Higgins is big-bodied (6'4"), physically gifted, and presents mismatch potential — but he's still refining his route running and consistency.

Like a suburban office building in a good location but in need of updates, the fundamentals are strong, and with the right coaching (aka "tenant improvements"), the upside is real.

CRE Traits:

Size and presence – His frame creates separation and red zone threat, just like a prominent office building stands out on a skyline.

Value-add profile – He's not yet fully optimized, but signs point to future performance gains.

Positional leverage – As the NFL shifts to more big-bodied receivers, Higgins is like a well-located office asset near a growing employment hub.

Luke Lachey = Small-Market Industrial Property

Highly Functional & Underrated – Lachey may not lead highlight reels, but he's a dependable tight end with solid blocking skills and soft hands. He does the grunt work — like a warehouse fulfilling e-commerce orders quietly but efficiently.

Low Maintenance, High Utility – His game is clean, and his learning curve is low. He's the kind of player who fits into almost any offensive system without friction.

CRE Traits:

Durable and resilient – Like a steel-frame industrial facility.

Multi-purpose – He can block, chip, or become a red-zone target — just like industrial space can flex between storage, distribution, or light manufacturing.

Not in a major market (yet) – He comes from a conservative offense, but could thrive with more exposure.

Kaleb Johnson = Value-Add Multifamily in an Emerging Area

Raw Talent with Big Upside – Johnson has elite traits (size, speed, burst), but hasn't fully capitalized on them yet. With the right coaching — like CapEx in a rehab — his value could explode.

Inconsistent Returns, But Intriguing Fundamentals – Injuries and O-line struggles hampered his production, but the underlying metrics show potential, just like strong submarket demand around an outdated building.

CRE Traits:

High-ceiling potential – Just needs the right development and support.

Undervalued asset – May not impress today, but long-term ROI could be strong.

Needs work – Coaching = rehab plan. Strength program = capital investment. NFL fit = lease-up strategy.

BONUS CRE Evaluation

Shedeur Sanders = Ground-Up High-Rise Development

1. Flash, Upside, and Buzz

Sanders brings huge media attention, NIL deals, leadership skills, and a strong arm. He's already a brand.

This is like a flashy high-rise development planned for a revitalizing downtown district — high visibility, lots of promise, and potential to become a market centerpiece.

2. Not Fully Proven at the Highest Level

While talented and productive, Sanders hasn't played in a Power 5 bowl game or proven himself against elite competition consistently.

Similarly, a ground-up project might be in pre-leasing or still under construction — you're betting on projections, renderings, and future demand, not in-place income.

3. Needs the Right Team Around Him

Like any young QB, Sanders needs a strong O-line, good coaching, and a supportive system to thrive.

Likewise, a successful development depends on a capable sponsor, solid financing, favorable zoning, and tenant demand. If any part falters, the risk spikes.

4. Long-Term Potential, Short-Term Volatility

Sanders could be a franchise quarterback — or flame out if development stalls. The variance is wide.

Ground-up CRE deals are similar: the IRR might look great on paper, but delays, cost overruns, or market shifts can derail the whole deal.

Bottom Line:

Shedeur Sanders is a high-upside, high-risk ground-up development project — backed by a big name, loaded with potential, but requiring time, skill, and the right structure to succeed. The return could be massive... but only if everything comes together.